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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 3926
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5230
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1289
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3357
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2595
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000747

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: SENIOR MP CALLS FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

1. (C) Hirdayaram Thani, a Nepali Congress Member of the Interim Parliament and the former chairman of the State Affairs Committee, told Emboff recently that the Maoists had failed to abide by their peace commitments. Thani, whose committee has oversight over the police and the Election Commission, worried whether the election laws would be passed in time to hold the Constituent Assembly election in June. Peace and security were prerequisites to conducting a free and fair election. Thani expressed interest in establishing a strong relationship with the U.S. Congress.

Maoists Not Serious About Commitments

2. (C) Hirdayaram Thani, a Nepali Congress Member of Parliament and former chairman of the State Affairs Committee, stated to Emboff recently that the Maoists had failed to translate their peace commitments into action. Thani, whose committee has oversight over the police and the Election Commission, remarked that the Maoists continued to abduct and extort, and had yet to return any confiscated land. The Maoists needed to correct their behavior before they could be included in an interim government. Instead, they had been chanting slogans inside the Parliament to exert pressure on the government to include them immediately. (Note: The Maoists were subsequently included in the Interim Government on April 1 without any change in their behavior. End note.) The Maoist leaders had threatened to start Jana Andolan III (a third People's Movement) if the government did not hold the Constituent Assembly election by June, Thani complained.

Inclusion Important, but Must Be Prioritized

3. (C) Thani made contradictory remarks while discussing the demands raised by the Madhesis, ethnic communities, dalits, and women to be included in Nepal's political process. On one hand, the MP stated that the demands of each group had to

be prioritized and considered by the government in a piecemeal approach. It was ironic, he noted, that the ethnic communities were trying to dismantle the state by demanding a federal structure at a time when Nepal needed a strong government to control Maoist behavior. However, he later said the government would address the demands of the marginalized communities in a comprehensive package. Thani did not make it clear how this would be done, or if the principal election law would include a provision to ensure representation for marginalized groups.

Peace and Security Required for Election

¶4. (C) Thani stated that the Constituent Assembly election would likely not be possible in June due to the deteriorating peace and security situation in the countryside. Peace and security would be prerequisites to holding the election. Before the election could be held, the government needed to address the undemocratic behavior the Maoists had shown both within and outside the Interim Parliament, the violent activities by the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF), and the rapid increase in extremist groups. Thani stated that the government could, at the most, provide three police officers in each polling station (if all police officers were deployed equally across the country); that would not be enough to keep the Maoists or other political parties from rigging the election.

Future Cooperation with Congress

¶5. (SBU) Thani told Emboff that the State Affairs Committee was interested in establishing a stronger relationship with

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the corresponding Committees in the U.S. Congress to exchange views. He hoped that such a relationship would augment the existing friendly relationship between the U.S. and Nepal and help guide the Committees in the Interim Parliament as they moved forward with various new laws.

Comment

¶6. (C) We see little to indicate that the requisite peace and security will be in place for the Constituent Assembly election in June. While the April 9 decision by the Cabinet to create a team headed by Peace Minister Ram Chandra Poudel to talk to the Madhesi and ethnic communities is good news, it remains to be seen whether the talks will be successful in bringing those groups into the process -- or indeed whether the Madhesi in particular will talk seriously to any government team as long as their bete noire, K.P. Sitaula, remains Home Minister. There is a strong likelihood that the Interim Parliament will pass the key election bill this week before the talks team can even get started. Thani's desire to build stronger relations between the Interim Parliament and the U.S. Congress is well intended but, given the anticipated short lifespan of the Interim Parliament, building that relationship will probably fall to the Constituent Assembly and its members.

MORIARTY